



June 1, 2005

Contact: Ines Calderon
Tel: 305-476-5451

Florida FTAA Applauds Citrus Mutual Support of DR-CAFTA Calls on Other Farm Groups to Back Agreement

Jorge L. Arrizurieta, President of Florida FTAA, Inc., today praised the decision by Florida Citrus Mutual's Board to support Congressional approval of the DR-CAFTA trade agreement, calling it a bold endorsement and challenging Florida's other agricultural groups to follow suit.

"Florida Citrus Mutual's endorsement of DR-CAFTA is bold and absolutely critical as we rally support around this fair and responsible trade agreement," said Arrizurieta. "Florida's citrus growers have been ardent supporters of the State's campaign to land the FTAA secretariat and they recognize that without DR-CAFTA there will be no FTAA."

"Now, it's time for other members of Florida's agricultural community to follow Florida Citrus Mutual's lead and do the right thing by standing up for DR-CAFTA and the agreement's tremendous economic benefits for the state," he added.

The decision to endorse DR-CAFTA was made at the Board meeting of the Florida Citrus Mutual Annual Industry Conference taking place in Singer Island where U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns will serve as the lunch keynote speaker tomorrow.

The Central American countries and the Dominican Republic under the agreement would form Florida's largest trading bloc, accounting for nearly double the total trade between Florida and Brazil, the state's largest single trading partner. Already, about 55% of the trade between Central America and the United States and 45% of the US-Caribbean trade moves through airports and seaports in Florida.

Florida FTAA has been working diligently to ensure that Florida's Congressional delegation supports the ratification of DR- CAFTA as a precursor to negotiations for the FTAA, which would bring together 34 democratically elected Western Hemisphere nations to form the most far-reaching trade agreement in history. FTAA would reach 800 million consumers with a combined gross domestic product of \$14 trillion.

Miami is a leading candidate to house the FTAA's headquarters known as the permanent secretariat. South Florida will be in the world spotlight from June 5 -7 as Ft. Lauderdale hosts leaders of the Organization of American States.

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Florida FTAA, Inc. is the private-public entity led by Governor Jeb Bush, City of Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Alvarez and officials throughout the State of Florida with the mission that Miami would become the site of the agreement's secretariat. Florida FTAA is chaired by Ambassador Charles E. Cobb, Jr. and managed by President Jorge L. Arrizurieta. The administrative offices are located at the Biltmore Hotel Conference Center of the Americas in Coral Gables, Florida.